

## LECTURE I.

### TENDENCY IN ENGLISH HISTORY.

It is a favourite maxim of mine that history, while it should be scientific in its method, should pursue a practical object. That is, it should not merely gratify the reader's curiosity about the past, but modify his view of the present and his forecast of the future. Now if this maxim be sound, the history of England ought to end with something that might be called a moral. Some large conclusion ought to arise out of it; it ought to exhibit the general tendency of English affairs in such a way as to set us thinking about the future and divining the destiny which is reserved for us. The more so because the part played by our country in the world certainly does not grow less prominent as history advances. Some countries, such as Holland and Sweden, might pardonably regard their history as in a manner wound up. They were once great, but the conditions of their greatness have passed away, and they now hold a secondary place. Their interest in their own past is therefore either sentimental or purely scientific; the only practical lesson of their history is a lesson of resignation. But England has grown steadily greater and greater,